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Iron Deficiency Anemia Workshop

Trip report

by

Fred F. Barrett

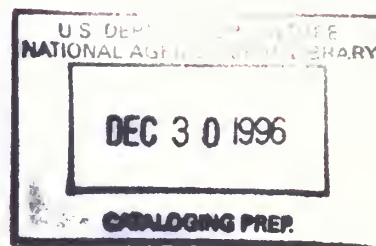
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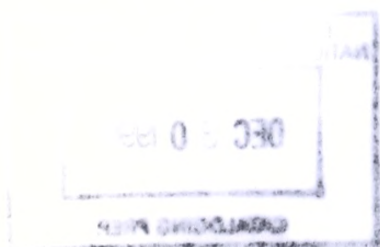
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Office of International Cooperation
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and

Nutrition Institute
Ministry of Health
Government of Egypt





Iron Deficiency Anemia Workshop

Background

Iron deficiency anemia is the most prevalent nutritional deficiency worldwide. It is the most common type of anemia in many countries. It is conservatively estimated that as many as one-half billion people, 12.5 percent of the world population, suffer from this deficiency.

Iron deficiency anemia is a serious major health problem in Egypt. It affects the physical well-being and mental performance of much of the population especially women and children. The recent 1978/80 National Nutrition Surveys conducted in Egypt by the Nutrition Institute, Ministry of Health-GOE indicated rates of anemia at about 38 percent in all pre-school children, 25 percent in pregnant and lactating women and 17 percent in non P & L women.

The Government of Egypt intends to combat iron deficiency anemia and wants to utilize the most appropriate and effective interventions to do so. The major interventions available are food fortification, including weaning foods and school feeding activities, supplementation, nutrition education and agriculture.

A feasibility study was carried out by Fred Barrett in June 1983 which looked at the potential of various foods as vehicles for iron fortification in general and especially evaluated the suitability of wheat flour for iron fortification. The study also looked at the feasibility of the successful implementation of a program for the iron fortification of wheat flour. The results of these evaluations were to be used in the development of a strategy for the Government of Egypt to use in combatting iron deficiency anemia.

Workshop

Plans were made for a workshop to address the problem of iron deficiency anemia. It was scheduled for October 10 - 13, 1983. The goal of the workshop was the development of a National Strategy for combatting anemia in Egypt.

The workshop was convened as scheduled with participants including key Egyptian personnel from concerned Ministries of the GOE, technical representatives from WHO and UNICEF, and experts in iron deficiency anemia (Cook) and food fortification (Barrett) from the U.S. Sam Kahn of AID/W served as co-planner and coordinator with Dr. Galal of the Ministry of Health, GOE. (See attached list of participants).

The workshop covered four days. The first two days were devoted to (a) the presentation and study of data establishing the parameters of the problem of anemia in Egypt, (b) a review of associated activities that have been undertaken by various entities in the Government of Egypt, and (c) in-depth discussions about the major interventions, including food fortification, which are effective in combatting anemia.

The last two days were used to develop a draft of a strategy paper for combatting anemia in Egypt. It included structuring the paper, working groups developing the various sections of the paper, and then general sessions to integrate the sections into complete document. The final session was spent in a review of the entire document by all participants and in their reaching agreement on it.

The strategy resulting from the workshop contained three main approaches to combatting iron deficiency anemia:

1. Iron fortification of one food vehicle
2. Iron supplementation tablets for women and children
3. Nutrition education activities integrated into the above two interventions to improve their effectiveness.

During the workshop I provided the resource information on food fortification in general and on iron fortification of wheat flour in Egypt during the discussion phases. Then I guided the development of the food fortification section of the strategy during the working group activities and presented the section to the group in the final working and approval sessions.

After the workshop, Dr. Kahn and I continued to work with Drs. Galal and El Abedeen in editing the document for form and clarity.

Follow-Up

When the Strategy is completed in final form, it will be introduced by the Minister of Health to the Council of Ministers for their approval. The Ministries of Agriculture and of Supply are reported to be in support of the strategy and will assist in obtaining its approval.

The Strategy includes a National Program for the iron fortification of wheat flour. After it is approved, the program will be initiated in stages by the implementation of Phase I. This phase will cover a selected location and will include recipients representing about five percent of the population of the country.

Successful completion of Phase I will be followed by an expansion of the activities to other areas of the country. The goal of the replication activities being to achieve national coverage with the availability of iron fortified wheat flour.

Similar plans have been developed for the Supplementation part of the Strategy with the goal being a National Program with country-wide coverage.

Support and Responsibility

The Ministry of Health is the initiating body for the implementation of a National Program. However, other ministries and local authorities will have primary responsibilities for specific activities of the program.

Support for carrying-out Phase I is anticipated both from USAID and UNICEF. USAID may provide technical assistance, equipment, and nutrients initially needed to get the iron fortification segment of Phase I off to a successful start. UNICEF may support the supplementation program.

The Ministry of Health will have to prepare a project proposal as part of a request for assistance from USAID.

PARTICIPANTS

Chairman : Dr. M. Gabr

Co-Chairman : Dr. M. Abdel Kader

Co-ordinator : Dr. O. Galal

Resource Persons :

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Dr. DeMaeyer | WHO |
| Dr. S. Kahn | AID |
| Dr. J. Cook | Kansas Univ. |
| Dr. F. Barrett | USDA |

Nutrition Institute:

Dr. Hekmat Aly
Dr. M. Amr Hussein
Dr. Ahmed Dakroury
Dr. Fikry El Nahry
Dr. M. El Ghorab
Dr. Farouk Shaheen

National Research Center:

Dr. Aly Zein El Abedeen
Dr. Soheir Ibrahim Salem
Dr. Onsy Metwally
Dr. Gamal Ghobrial
Dr. Sayed Hegazy

Ein Shams University:

Dr. Amed Samy Khalifa

Cairo University:

Dr. Safwat Shoukry
Dr. Feisal Yunis
Dr. Shafik Naser

Ministry of Agriculture:

Dr. Ahmed Khorshid

Ministry of Supply:

Mr. Mohamed Kamel Choneme

Ministry of Health:

Dr. Bahaa El Din Hashem
Dr. Abdel Aziz Sharawi
Dr. Farouk Mustafa Munir
Dr. Mohamed Sayed Khidr

UNICEF:

Dr. Ulf H. Kreuger
Dr. El Motaz Mobarak
Ms. Amira El Malatawy

USAID/CAIRO:

Dr. William Oldham
Mr. Paul Rusby

CRS:

Mr. George Ropes

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